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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/SPG
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DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [SU](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: UNAMID PUBLIC INFORMATION STRATEGY IN DISARRAY, ACCORDING
TO DFID CONTRACTOR

REF: A. Khartoum 518

¶B. Khartoum 502

¶1. (SBU) Summary: CDA Fernandez met with representatives from Albany Associates, a communications firm that has been hired by DFID to support UNAMID. Albany, which has an interest in getting its contract extended, warned that UNAMID is in disarray and has no communications strategy. The Albany reps said they prepared a radio strategy for UNAMID, but claimed the internal bureaucracy may keep it from getting off the ground. Albany is clearly hoping for intervention from donors and major UN contributors on its behalf but their criticism rings true. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Simon Haselock and Rida Ettarasani from Albany Associates met with Charge d'Affaires Fernandez April 18 to discuss UNAMID's public information strategy in Darfur. Haselock described UNAMID's public information effort as "chaos," the office falling prey to an internal turf war among its 17 full-time staff since the departure of its most recent director in March. UNAMID has named an Algerian to be Chief Public Information Officer, but expectations are low. According to Haselock, the new appointee was selected as a result of quirks in the UN's hiring process, not because he was the most competent or qualified, "in fact, no other UN mission wanted him". Haselock pointed out that UNAMID has organized few press conferences, does not have any information programs in place, and has received no press coverage of important UNAMID events. He predicted that UNAMID's Public Information Department (PID) will be inoperational for the near future.

¶3. (SBU) Haselock and Ettarasani consider Albany's most recent radio proposal to be the best chance for solidifying support for UNAMID in Darfur. Designed in conjunction with David Smith, formerly of Radio Okapi (MONUC's radio station in Congo), Albany plans a threefold approach. First and most immediately, a UNAMID internal forces radio station will provide information to UNAMID troops, create a collective consciousness of mission, and improve morale. Additionally, an internal forces station will be inexpensive to operate, and will not be subject to any government interference. Second, a UN radio targeting Darfuris which may take longer to get off the ground, but will provide news and current affairs programming to supplement UNAMID and UN civil society efforts in Darfur. Third, an independent FM radio station, Afia radio, will broadcast with programming designed by the NGO Afiya Sudan, and be much quicker and cheaper than UN radio. Haselock does not believe that Afiya radio will prove controversial to GoS because it will open a cultural link from Darfur to Khartoum. Haselock anticipates that the proposals will be completed within the next two weeks.

¶4. (SBU) Despite its efforts, Albany faces difficultly planning past July of this year, when its contract with DFID expires. Haselock was

skeptical that the UN will sign a contract with Albany. Unfortunately, Albany's best products may languish come summer, most notably Albany's biweekly Afia newspaper which he said has a distribution of 200,000 copies. This year's cultural festivals - including the April 25 equestrian festival, and a Darfur festival planned for early summer - will take place as scheduled, but without guaranteed funding it may not be replicated and improved upon in the future. Albany has prepared a contingency plan in case it does not receive a UN contract: it has submitted proposals to the Canadians and Dutch for infusions of funding into the Afia Darfur Newspaper and Afia Sudan NGO, beginning in May of this year and lasting until March 2009.

¶15. (SBU) Comment: An effective communications strategy is a key part to UNAMID maintaining credibility, something AMIS was unable to do. Albany seems to have laid out a good strategy and there is no doubt that UNAMID can use the assistance Albany offers. The US and other donors can weigh in on Albany's behalf, but it is contingent upon Albany to sell its product and services to UNAMID - which may ultimately decide to manage all programs in-house. In this case the proposals Albany has submitted to the Dutch and Canadians may be Albany's best chance of remaining active in Darfur. Haselock's comments are one more example of UNAMID's disarray, which seems to exist in both the civilian and military sides of the operation.

FERNANDEZ